

Lake Sun Leader

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Cooper Thanked for STEMI Bill



A plaque with a three-dimensional heart on it shows how much a piece of legislation creating a unified statewide system that handles heart attacks and strokes like trauma center means to the Missouri Ambulance Association. The system, the first of its kind in the nation, transports patients suffering from stroke or a heart attack to the nearest hospital with a designated stroke and/or STEMI center, rather than the nearest hospital, saving valuable, life-saving minutes. Jason White of the Missouri Ambulance Association presented Rep. Wayne Cooper, R-Camdenton, with the plaque Tuesday. Cooper sponsored the bill creating the centers.

Lake of the Ozarks, Mo. - With only 90 minutes to work with before the muscle starts to die, every minute literally counts when someone is having a heart attack. Patients first realizing that tingling sensation in their hands, or a drooping face, is a sign of a stroke, have 180 minutes before critical muscles start to die.

In 2006, heart disease and stroke accounted for one-third of all Missouri deaths.

In the 2008 legislative session, House Bill 1790 made it through with a sweeping victory and could significantly lower that number.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Wayne Cooper, R-Camdenton, creates a unified statewide system that handles heart attacks and strokes much like trauma centers.

When a patient first realizes they are experiencing the symptoms of either, rather than being rushed to the nearest hospital that may or may not be able to accommodate them, emergency crews will transport the patient to designated stroke and/or STEMI centers, Cooper said. Hospitals with the type of capabilities to open up clogged arteries quickly can ensure higher survival rates.

Missouri is the first state in the nation to adopt such a plan, revolutionizing the way care is given to stroke and STEMI patients, Cooper added.

By taking patients to the best hospital for the best treatment, valuable minutes can be saved when minutes mean the difference between life, death or a long-term disability.

Cooper was recognized by the Missouri Ambulance Association at the Camden County Ambulance District's meeting Tuesday night with a plaque with a heart on it.

Bob Patterson, with the Missouri Ambulance Association, said he wanted the plaque to stand out against all the other plaques in Cooper's office as a thank you for the hard work Cooper put in to ensure the legislation passed.

In the first year the bill was introduced, it unanimously passed through the House and Senate.

Cooper said the bill is unique in that it could it never be equaled by such positive response from his colleagues.

It usually takes anywhere between three to five years for a piece of legislation to be passed.

Cooper credited many people, including several doctors who worked before him to spread the message on how important the bill was.

Sen. Charles Shields, R-St. Joseph, sponsored the legislation for Cooper on the Senate side.

House Bill 1790 was signed by Gov. Matt Blunt in July.

The health department has already begun preparing the state to implement a system of stroke and STEMI centers. A Time Critical Diagnosis Task Force was formed by the department last November.

Since then, the task force has been meeting to discuss how to build the new system. The task force includes more than 100 members of the emergency medicine community.

Contact this reporter at deannaw@lakesunleader.com